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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study reported in this document was to determine the expectancy levels of Puerto Rican mothers for their children's educational careers. A sample of 125 mothers whose children attended a Chicago elementary school, located in a lower socioeconomic Spanish-speaking community, provided the data reported. Specific factors examined in relation to the mothers' educational aspirations for their children include: (1) the educational and occupational levels of the mothers; (2) the mothers' geographical origin; (3) family size; (4) language dominance at home; and (5) family income. Findings are presented in textual and statistical form. (Author/EB)

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EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF PUERTO RICAN MOTHER S FOR THEIR CHILDREN

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Ethnic groups migrate to the United States seeking equality and socioeconomic opportunity. They all have something in common--high educational aspirations for their children. "Parents from every migrant group coming to america have made similar statements and Puerto Ricans are no exception...."(1)

Puerto Ricans face many of the cultural, socioeconomic and political conflicts of preceding immigrant groups, with one exception. They and other Spanish-Speaking groups enter a more complex and sophisticated american culture than did preceding immigrant groups accompanying this economic change in american society was the shrinking non-skilled and semi-skilled job market, placing education at a higher premium than ever before and as only avenue to economic success.

Although educational opportunities are available, the socioeconomic stauts and educational expectations of the family greatly influence their realization.

Children raised in a high socioeconomic environment have a better chance of finishing school than lower socioeconomic children. The lack of parental education hinders children in their school careers. Parents are unable to assist their children with schoolwork and are frequently unable to motivate them in their work at school because of

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their inadequate understanding of what the school is attempting to do. In the case of Puerto Rican Families, Lucas found that:

> The mothers had achieved a complete high school education in 11.2% of the eight graders, 11.2% of the freshman, 10.3% of the seniors and 6.1% of dropouts. As for the father's education the picture is similar. 18.6% of the eight graders fathers had a high school diploma: 19.4% of freshman, 14.9% of seniors and 8% of dropouts. The father is not as influential on the pupils as the mothers: but he is an important factor in the educational aspirations of the family.[2]

The educational attainment of parents may not necessarily be a primary influence. Expectations may not necessarily be a function of educational status.

Zirbel, who surveyed the educational expectation of Puerto Rican parents for their children, found that

> Despite their low level of educational attainment, the parents expressed high levels of educational aspirations and expectations for their children. A majority of the parents (53.9 per cent) realistically aspired for the children to complete at least four years of college. Only one parent aspired for their child to complete less than a high school education. Thus, in the face of obvious socio-economic and cultural-linguistic barriers, these parents reflected the American Dream of success through education.[3]

As Lucas has pointed out, mothers, no matter what their social class or ethnic background, influence their children's career. The most[4] while the Puerto Rican family is patriarchially structured, it is the mother that appears to be the key figure in influencing the children's education and career choice:

> Puerto Rican subjects cited as key figures, in order of descending frequency, their mothers, school counselors, relatives not of the immediate family, persons currently holding the occupation in question, teachers, peers, their fathers, their brothers and sisters, and neighbors or family friends are the greatest influence.[5]

Although research has been done on the aspirations of Puerto Rican parents for the children's education, no studies have been done on the expectations of Puerto Rican mothers, in particular. Since it appears that the mother's expectations are the primary motivating factors in Puerto Rican child's educational career, an investigation is needed to determine what factors influence the mother's expectations.

Problem:

The purpose of this study is to determine level of the expectancies of Puerto Rican mothers for their children's educational careers. Specifically, the study is designed to obtain data concerning the following factors:

1. the educational level of the mothers and their educational aspirations for their children.
2. the occupational level of the mothers and their educational aspirations for their children.
3. the mother's geographical origin with respect to the educational expectations of their children.
4. the size of the Puerto Rican family in regard to the mothers expectancy toward the children's educational career.
5. the language dominance at home with regard to the educational expectations of Puerto Rican mothers.
6. the family income in regard to the educational expectancies of Puerto Rican mothers.

Population and Sample:

Population consisted of Puerto Rican mothers whose children attended a chicago elementary school, located in a lower socio-economic Spanish-speaking community. One hundred and twenty-five mothers of children (grades one through eight) randonly selected; each received a questionnaire. Of the seventy-six questionnaire returned, a random sample of fifty were used in the study.

The self-designed questionnaire, written in English and Spanish, contained twenty-one items and the data were tabulated and recorded in percentiles.

Findings:

The results indicated positived correlations between the years of schooling achieved by the mothers and the level of education aspired for their children. Table I shows the higher the mothers educational attainment, the higher the expectations for their children.

Mothers who completed from ten to twelve years of schooling, 66.6 per cent, expected their children to attend college. However, the information obtained from mothers who attended college may not be representative in that the sample consisted of only three mothers who attended college.

A majority of the mothers (62.2 per cent) expected their children to complete at least four years of college. None of the mothers expected their children to complete less than four years of high

school or vocational school.

Even the mothers who completed only three years of school had high level expectations for their children 60 per cent, expected their children to complete four years of college.

The findings also show that both working mothers and non-working mothers expected their children to obtain at least a high school diploma. A majority of the working (66.7 per cent) and non-working (51.4 per cent) mothers expected their children to complete at least four years of college, but the expectations for the children to obtain at least a vocational education was higher for the non-working (14.3 per cent) than for the working (6.7 per cent) mothers.

The data, which show that the better educated mothers held jobs, indicate a correlation between parent educational status and expectations. Family income also correlated with the mother's educational expectations. Table II shows that all mothers, no matter the family income, have comparable educational aspirations for their children.

None of the mothers expected their child to obtain less than a high school education, but college aspirations rose with income. On the other hand, a larger percentage (25%) of mothers with incomes $200 or more aspired for their children to have a vocational education in contrast to families (10.0%) with incomes less than

$100, families (10.5%) with $101 to $150, and families (15.3%) with $151 to $200 weekly incomes. Perhaps the higher income, and better educated parents are not only more aware of the advantages of a higher education, but also the need for a trade, a marketable skill.

A mother's birth place seem to have little influence on the educational expectations for her children. Of the Urban-born mothers (45% of the sample) 26 per cent expected their children to complete high school, 22 per cent vocational school, and 52 percent college. Of the rural-born mothers (55% of the sample) 34 percent wanted their children to complete high school, 8 percent vocational school, and 59 percent college. Similar to the higher income family, more (22%) urban-born mothers selected vocational education than (8%) rural-born mothers. Perhaps the urban-born mothers are more realistic in terms of educational opportunities, the quality of neighborhood schools and knowing that the general high school diploma does not, in many cases, lead to a good paying job.

Parents and students are aware that they can work in a factory without a high school diploma. Bard said:

> Negroes and Puerto Ricans know that their diploma is often useless on the job market. Statistically, there is practically no difference in the unemployment rates of minority group youngsters who finish high school and those who dropout.[6]

If a college education is unattainable, a vocational education is the more realistic and best alternative.

A similar trend is seen when the mothers' expectations are compared to the dominant language spoken in the home.

Mothers of children who speak spanish (55.6 per cent) or both languages at home (59.3 per cent) have higher aspirations as compared to mothers who use English (40 per cent). The data could indicate that the English dominant families, who may be more urban and longer United States residents than the other groups, are more realistic about the attainment higher education for their children. Since this group was only 10 percent of the sample, it is difficult to extrapolate beyond the indications. The fact that the English-dominant families did not select vocational education, might indicate either the undesirability of a trade in relation to the preference for the more status general high school or college education.

Family size also seems to be related to mothers' educational aspirations for their children. Table IV shows that all mothers, no matter the size of the family, have high aspirations for their children. However, it seems that mothers who have larger families (7 and more) have less college aspirations for their children (43.8 per cent) as compared to families of 3 to 4 (56.3 per cent) and families of 5 to 6 (66.7 per cent).

Mothers with families of 3 to 4 children have the least vocational aspirations for their children (6.2 per cent) as compared to families of 5 to 6 (16.7 per cent) and families of 7 and more (18.7 per cent). Since most of the families have lower income (most of whom are employed in factories and some are on welfare), it seems reasonable that mothers with smaller families would have more time and financial resources (even a job) to help her children attain a higher level of education, whereas mothers with large families (7 or more) who have a full-time job as mother and housewife, would probably not have the same resources available.

Summary and Conclusions:

The major findings of the study demonstrate that all 50 Puerto Rican mothers expected their children to graduate from either a general or vocational high school. The majority of mothers (62%) expected their children to complete college. The percentage was higher for working mothers (66.7%) as compared to non-working mothers (51.4%). Both rural-and urban born parents had similar expectations for their children. Even families with disparate incomes ($100 to over $200 per week) had comparable educational aspirations for their children. Fifty-four percent of the families expected their children to attain a college education. Educational expectations seemed to

be related to the degree of Spanish spoken in the home. In "Spanish-dominated homes, mothers (59.3%) had the highest expectations, followed by the bilingual home (55.4%) and the English-dominated home (40%). The sample size of the latter group makes it difficult to draw any conclusions regarding the lower aspirations of the "English" sample. The data do indicate that perhaps the bilingual groups' higher expectations is a function of adaptability within two cultures.

As expected, large lower-socioeconomic families of 7 or more members expressed lower educational expectations thatn smaller families, affected by socio-economic and cultural factors.

Although the data show that lower-socioeconomic Puerto Rican mothers' have high educational want the best quality education for their children, they nevertheless recognize that there are real obstacles blocking their expectations. Despite the socioeconomic and cultural-linguistic problems, this study supports Zinkels' findings (53.9%) that the majority (62%) of lower socioeconomic Puerto Rican parents expected their children to complete four years of college.[7] Like Zinkel's study all of the parents wanted their offspring to attain no less than a high school education.

Since the Puerto Rican mother seems to be the primary influence in her children's career, the following recommendations are in order:

1. Schools should provide mothers and fathers with information on career opportunities, college and

university admissions, vocational programs and scholarships.

2. Parent-school education programs to show parents how they can help further their children's education at home.
3. Early career and educational guidance programs for children in the schools.
4. Greater articulation and communication between the school and the home.

TABLE I

MOTHER'S EDUCATIONAL LEVELS AND
EDUCATIONAL EXPECTANCIES FOR THEIR CHILDREN

EXPECTATIONS OF MOTHERS

Years of Schooling attainment by mothers	Number N=50	Less than High School	High School	Vocational	College
0-3	10	0	30.0%	10.0%	60.0%
4-6	14	0	42.8%	14.3%	42.9%
7-9	11	0	45.6%	9.0%	45.4%
10-12	12	0	8.3	25.0%	66.7%
13-16	3	0	0.0%	0.0%	100.%

Table II shows that all mothers, no matter the family income, have comparable educational aspirations for their children.

TABLE II

APPROXIMATE WEEKLY FAMILY INCOME AND EDUCATIONAL EXPECTANCIES FOR CHILDREN

Weekly Incomes	Less than High School	High School	Vocational	College
Less than $100	0%	40.0%	10.0%	50.0%
from $101 to $150	0%	26.3%	10.5%	53.2%
from $151 to $200	0%	38.5%	15.4%	46.1%
more than $200	0%	12.5%	25.0%	62.5%

Table III shows that children in this study came from homes that favored bilingualism (54%) or preferred Spanish (36%) to be spoken in the home.

TABLE III

LANGUAGE DOMINANCE AT HOME AND THE EDUCATIONAL EXPECTANCIES FOR CHILDREN

Dominant Language Spoken at Home	N=50	Less than High School	High School	Vocational	College
Spanish	18	0%	22.2%	22.2%	55.6%
English	5	0%	60.0%	0.0%	40.0%
Both languages	27	0%	29.6%	11.1%	59.3%

Table IV shows that all mothers, no matter the size of the family, have high aspirations for their children.

TABLE IV

SIZE OF THE FAMILY AND MOTHERS EDUCATIONAL EXPECTANCIES FOR CHILDREN

Number of Family members	N=50	Less than High School	High School	Vocational	College
3 to 4	16	0%	37.5%	6.2%	56.3%
5 to 6	18	0%	16.6%	16.7%	66.7%
7 and more	16	0%	18.7%	18.7%	43.8%